

TOOLKITS

Education: Starting a Book Distribution Team

Book Distribution

THE FACTS

80% of preschool and after-school programs serving low-income populations have no age-appropriate books for their children.¹

A recent study shows that while in middle income neighborhoods the ratio of books per child is 13 to 1, in low-income neighborhoods, the ratio is 1 age-appropriate book for every 300 children.²

The most successful way to improve the reading achievement of low-income children is to increase their access to print. Communities ranking high in achievement tests have several factors in common: an abundance of books in public libraries, easy access to books in the community at large and a large number of textbooks per student.³

Commit yourself and a team of your friends and neighbors to help increase reading achievement and literacy by joining United We Serve. This tool kit will give you the basics to run a book drive, organize your group, and make an impact this summer.

What will you do to help increase reading and literacy?

GETTING STARTED

While no two projects will be the same, successful projects will share a few common practices. We encourage you to incorporate the following elements into your service project:

- Create a team with your friends and neighbors to share the effort;
- Set outcome-based goals and track your progress to those goals;
- Celebrate your successes together.

¹ Neuman, Susan B., et al. Access for All: Closing the Book Gap for Children in Early Education. Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 2001, p. 3.

² Neuman, Susan B. and David K. Dickinson, ed. Handbook of Early Literacy Research, Volume 2. New York, NY: 2006, p. 31.

³ Newman, Sanford, et al. "Americans Child Care Crisis: A Crime Prevention Tragedy"; Fight Crime; Invest in Kids, 2000.

The Challenge: Many community-based organizations do not have enough capacity to manage a large number of volunteers, so they need you to organize yourself in coordination with them. This tool kit is designed to either help you organize a group and be a positive addition to a community-based organization, or, if such an organization does not exist, to be a well-organized independently-run group that fills a needed gap in the community.

A step by step guide to getting started and executing service activities follows. Please let us know how your project goes and what you learn by telling your story at [Serve.gov](https://www.serve.gov).

STEP ONE: IDENTIFY LOCAL PARTNERS

Check out the organizations already doing good work in your area. Many existing service groups have identified community needs and built the expertise to provide solutions.

- Search national and local organizations with [tips](#) from the American Library Association and ask them how volunteers can contribute,
- [Get a guide to finding local partners](#)
- If no book distribution organizations exist in your community, contact local child care centers, libraries, and summer camps to assess the group's needs.
- Get a list of recommended books from your local library.

STEP TWO: BUILD A TEAM

Teams can help share the work, motivate members and hold each other accountable. Teams build community. Ask your family, friends, colleagues, faith group members, or book club devotees to serve with you.

- Host a house meeting or potluck to choose a project, set goals, recruit volunteers and plan next steps.
- [Get a guide for hosting a house meeting](#)
- Post your service opportunities on [Serve.gov](https://www.serve.gov) to recruit new volunteers.

STEP THREE: SET A GOAL

Set a service goal for June 22 – September 11 and hold yourself accountable. Commit as an individual and as a team to collecting and distributing a certain number of books. Set your goals high to stretch yourself. Then keep track of how you are doing and designate someone to be responsible for updating the group on how you are progressing toward your goals. You'll be surprised at how much you can do when you commit, focus, and follow through.

- [Get a goal-setting guide](#)

STEP FOUR: SERVE YOUR COMMUNITY

The key to effective service is planning. Organize your materials, make confirmation calls and, if you have time, read supplemental materials before you volunteer.

- [Get a tip sheet for your service activity](#)
- [Heart of America Foundation](#) is a national organization focused on providing young people with the resources needed to succeed. The [Books from the Heart](#) program provides [step-by-step](#) information on running book drives and offers [matching funds](#) to local initiatives.

STEP FIVE: REPORT AND CELEBRATE SUCCESSSES

Your team members, the community, and the President want to know about your successes and hear your stories. Share your accomplishments by reporting your results. We will highlight the best stories throughout the summer. Tell us about your successes and what you have learned, or just tell your story of service at [Serve.gov](https://www.serve.gov)

FOLLOW UP**SPREAD THE SERVICE**

- After every event, thank your volunteers and sign them up for the next event.

FINDING LOCAL PARTNERS: BOOKS

Check out the organizations already doing good work. You or your group can plug in with them rather than trying to do it all on your own. Many existing service groups have identified community needs and built the expertise to provide solutions. A few phone calls can produce all the information you need to know in order to get started.

For book donation programs:

- Search [national book donation organizations](#).
- Identify organizations within your own community:
 - Search for [local libraries](#) that need your help.
 - Call your preschool, high school, or community group and ask *how* you can help (sample phone script below).

SAMPLE PHONE SCRIPT:

- Hi, my name is _____ and I'm interested in volunteering with your organization. May I speak with your volunteer coordinator?
- Some friends and I would like to organize a book drive. Would you be interested in accepting donated books?
- Do you have restrictions on the kind of books you accept?
- Do you accept used books as well as new books?
- Do you have a book wish list?
- Do you need books that target a specific age group?
- If we create a book drive flyer, can we use your organization's name and/or logo?
- Are you the best person for me to contact?

You may use the chart below to organize your information.

<p>The organization my team will send books to is:_____</p> <p>The contact at the organization is:_____</p> <p>The organization accepts <u>new/used</u> books for children ages ____ to ____.</p> <p>The organization has a list of recommended books <u>yes/no</u>.</p> <p>My local library has a list of recommended books <u>yes/no</u>.</p>
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House Meetings

Purpose:

House meetings are a valuable tactic for recruiting volunteers and building a team. House meetings allow community members to share their concerns and join together to work for progress. Within the room, you already have all the tools you need to enact change on a local level. Every attendee can contribute time or resources or leadership abilities.

Your house meeting will help you identify your leadership team. The people that are committed enough to come to your house meeting should be considered potential leaders of the initiatives being implemented in their communities.

As a house meeting host, invite people from your social network to participate in a discussion about your community, pressing needs, and potential solutions. House meetings often engage people new to service and unclear about next steps. Serving with the support of a team will increase the ease and comfort of many new volunteers.

Building community through house meetings is a critical step toward the President's ultimate goal, which is to support everyday Americans in a grassroots effort to improve lives and strengthen communities.

A House Meeting

Goals

- Choose and plan a service project for the summer.
- Set measurable group and personal goals for your United We Serve project.
- Identify 5 attendees to be team leaders.
- Plan the next meeting of the leadership team and identify next steps for each leader.
- Obtain commitments from all attendees to volunteer on a regular basis from June 22 – September 11.

Host Duties

- Before
 - To have **20** people attend, you will need to invite **50**. Brainstorm a list of **50** people to invite. Include your friends, family, members of your faith group, colleagues, book club attendees, etc.
 - Make calls to the **50** people on your list to invite them to your house meeting. Remember that phone calls are much more effective than a mass email.
 - Post your house meeting on Serve.gov and invite local residents interested in volunteering to attend.
 - Browse Serve.gov to see what needs in your community aren't being met and which organizations you might be able to partner with. Take some preliminary steps to identify local partners already working in the community.
 - Prepare necessary materials.

- During
 - Be prepared to give a short explanation of why you became involved/what inspired you to serve.
 - Consider how you most want to serve your community. President Obama has identified four target areas for summer service: health, education, community renewal, and energy and environment. What does your community most need?

- After
 - Thank attendees and get their pledge to serve this summer.
 - Organize a follow-up volunteer leadership meeting with your new team to take next steps.

House Meeting Planner

Use this brainstorm sheet to think of those you want to invite, including those who have never volunteered before or may be new to Untied We Serve.

Name	Phone #	Invited (Y/N)	Committed (Y/N)	Confirmed (Y/N)	Notes
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Name: Please print the invitee’s full name.

Invite: Please mark **yes, no, maybe** or **left message (LM)**. This will help you track who you need to contact and who you should be calling for confirmation. The only real invitations are when you speak with someone directly.

Commit: Please mark **yes, no** or **maybe**.

Confirm: Please mark **yes, no** or **left message (LM)**. You’ll need to call every invitee who said yes or maybe, and every invitee who only got a left message. Please do not assume that **anybody** will come without a confirmation the day before your meeting. It can’t hurt to give people a quick reminder, and you need to know how many people will be at your meeting to make that meeting as effective and enjoyable as possible.

House Meeting Agenda

*****Before starting the meeting, have everyone sign in and appoint a timekeeper who will keep each section running on time.*****

0:00-0:10 Host welcome and introduction

- Host of the meeting introduces themselves and welcomes attendees.
- Host shares why (s)he was inspired to organize the house meeting and the purpose of the meeting.

0:10-0:25 Attendee introductions

- Go around the room and ask each person to introduce themselves and share their reason for wanting to serve this summer.

0:25-0:45 Choose a project

- Host introduces three or four project ideas and opens up the room for discussion.
- Discuss what projects will work best in your community.
- Group votes on project choice.

0:45-0:55 Set goals and identify leadership

- Ask which attendees are interested in being volunteer leaders – they should stay after the meeting for 15 minutes and commit to a weekly planning meeting from June 22 - September 11.
- Ask each attendee to consider personal summer goals and make a realistic but ambitious summer commitment.

0:55-1:00 Conclusion

- At the end of the meeting, the group should have:
 - At least one project to commit to for the summer.
 - A leadership team.
 - Pledges from each attendee to participate.

1:00-1:15 Leadership team meeting

- Meet with volunteer leaders to set weekly meeting and divide responsibilities.
- Fill out attached worksheets.

Leadership Team Worksheet

The members of my team include:

Name	Phone Number	Email

Our weekly leadership meetings occur every _____ at _____.

Who are 5 other friends and family members who you will call to enlist in your group’s project? Make these calls during the leadership team meeting, if possible:

Name	Phone Number	Email

Setting Goals and Tracking Progress

Breaking Down Your Goal

What is your group's project?

Who are your local partners?

What is your group's goal? (ie, how many lbs of donated food will you secure, how many hours will you spend reading to kids, how many homes will you audit?)

How many weeks do you have until the National Day of Service and Remembrance on September 11th?

What will you have to average per week between now and September 11th to reach your goal?

How many volunteers will you have to recruit on average per week to reach that goal? How many hours would you guess they have to work? If it's not clear at first, you should be ambitious and then adjust your recruitment goal as you go.

Tracking Progress to Goals

Our team will report progress to goals every _____ to _____.

_____ will share our progress to goals with all team members by email/phone calls every _____.

We will also share our story and accomplishments at serve.gov.

SETTING GOALS: BOOK DRIVES

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The most successful way to improve the reading achievement of low-income children is to increase their access to print. Communities ranking high in achievement tests have several factors in common: an abundance of books in public libraries, easy access to books in the community at large and a large number of textbooks per student.⁶

What will you do to help increase reading and literacy?

SET CONCRETE GOALS

Setting goals helps you be accountable to yourself and also increases accountability within a group. Clear goals at the beginning of a project will also help you determine how your project will work and what role group members can play. Once goals are set, you can track your progress, compare your results with other group members, and figure out what works best so everyone can meet (or exceed) their goals.

So, set a service goal for June 22 – September 11 and hold yourself accountable.

Here are some impact-based goals you could set for yourself or with your team this summer. Set a goal, keep track, and let the group know how you are progressing to goal:

- As an individual, I will commit to collecting and delivering _____ donated books this summer.
- As a team we will commit to collecting and delivering _____ donated books this summer.

Part of setting good outcome goals is thinking about how you will achieve them. As a group or an individual, think about process-based goals to map out how you will hit your goals above:

⁴ Neuman, Susan B., et al. Access for All: Closing the Book Gap for Children in Early Education. Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 2001, p. 3.

⁵ Neuman, Susan B. and David K. Dickinson, ed. Handbook of Early Literacy Research, Volume 2. New York, NY: 2006, p. 31.

⁶ Newman, Sanford, et al. "Americans Child Care Crisis: A Crime Prevention Tragedy"; Fight Crime; Invest in Kids, 2000.

- I will recruit ___ volunteers to join our service group to run book drives.
- As an individual, I will manage _____ book drives.
- As a team, we will manage _____ book drives.

TRACK PROGRESS TOWARD GOALS

- Set a weekly or biweekly deadline to report progress. For example, "Our team will report progress every Friday. The person responsible for reporting results for your team is _____."
- Make sure every group member is in the loop. Designate a group member to track and share the results. For example, "Our team will share our progress with all members by email/phone calls every week. The person responsible for sharing progress is _____."
- Keep track of your progress. Score sheets like the one below can be helpful.

Week	# books distributed	# individuals asked to donate	# book drive locations	# volunteers active
June 22				
June 29				
July 6				
July 13				
July 20				
July 27				
August 3				
August 10				
August 17				
August 24				
August 31				
September 7				
Total				

TIPS: RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL BOOK DRIVE

Before your book drive begins:

- **Build a network:** Decide where your team will collect books. Good locations include the office, small retail businesses, and local schools. Each team member can choose one location to target. At each location ask for approval (see attached letter) and locate boxes in a highly visible area.
- **Select books:** Decide what books will be collected. Often, people donate books that are familiar from childhood but not necessarily appropriate for current audiences. Ask your local library for a list of recommended books. Also, the organization you're serving may have specific guidelines about the books they accept.
- **Organize logistics:** A typical book drive lasts about 2-3 weeks. The materials you will need include boxes, storage space for collected books and flyers.
- **Plan a Kick-Off event:** Kick-off your book drive with an event! You can host a party and ask each attendee to bring a book. You can partner with your faith group to request books at service. Consider alerting local media.

During your book drive:

- **Consider incentives:** Motivate your friends and co-workers to donate by creating a competition or organizing a raffle. Keep track of which location gathers the greatest number of books. Record which individual contributes the greatest number of books. Recognize the donors with certificates or awards.
- **Spread the word:** Decide how people will be encouraged to participate. The most successful way to gather books is to ask your personal network to contribute. These requests will be most successful when made in person or by phone. Flyers and emails are useful, but less successful.

After your book drive ends:

- **Sort your books:** Calculate the number of books you collected and sort the books according to the organization's guidelines.
- **Celebrate:** Share the total number of books you collected with all your participants. Thank your participants. Consider how you could do it better next time. Share your story on Serve.gov. Plan your next drive!

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

National organizations accepting book donations

- American Library Association provides a [guide](#) to national book donation organizations.
- [Delicious](#) connects you with local organizations in need of books.
- American Library Association lists organizations that provide books to soldiers serving overseas.
 - [Books for Soldiers](#)
 - [Operation Paperback](#)
- Most libraries accept donated books. Search for your [local library](#).

Additional tips on organizing book drives

- Heart of America offers [tips](#) for book drives at schools and accepts donations from across the country.
- Page Ahead offers [book drive tips](#) for schools and offices and accepts donations in Washington State.

Recommended books to donate:

- American Library Association's [notable books for children 0 – 14 years of age](#)
- American Library Association's [notable books for young adults](#)
- American Library Association's [recommended reading lists](#)
- Booklist's [top 50 books for youth](#) in 2008

CELEBRATE YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Your work this summer matters and should be celebrated. Remember to go to [Serve.gov](https://www.serve.gov) and tell us your summer story of service.

Also, be sure to keep track of what worked for you this summer and what could be improved. You can learn from this service project when you organize your next service project!